

# ***South Precinct Email Community Newsletter***

February 11, 2008



Dear Community Friends:

## **Residential Burglaries**

We wanted to spend this newsletter bring your attention to the issue of Burglaries. It is not uncommon for there to be an increase in residential burglaries burglary attempts following the holiday season. This historical trend seems to be bearing out again this year and it is impacting several South Precinct neighborhoods.

Here are a few trends regarding these recent residential burglaries:

- Residential burglaries most often occur during daylight hours, when most people are away from home at work. By contrast, burglaries of commercial properties most often occur at night when the business is closed and unoccupied.
- Common methods of entry include forcing open a door, either by kicking it or by prying the lock, or forcing open a window.
- Many times, entry is made through an open window. This is particularly true during warm weather months, which is when we see another increase in residential burglary.
- Small portable items are most often taken. These include I-pods, laptops, jewelry and cash. Larger items such as televisions, DVD players and VCRs are also taken, but recent residential burglaries seem to be of those items that are easily transportable and concealable.
- In those incidents where neighbors were home and saw suspicious activity, they called 911 and were able to provide suspect descriptions. In other incidents where witnesses saw the suspects, when the suspects realized they had been seen, the suspects ran from the residence they were attempting to gain entry and the burglary was foiled.

We do have occasion when the residence is occupied at the time of the burglary. These are very rare. In recent incidents of occupied burglary, there was no contact between the residents and the burglars. The focus of the burglar was to get in, get the stuff and get out without drawing attention to themselves.

The good news is that residents have been calling in suspicious persons and activity at a very high rate. We've seen a sharp increase in calls to 911 about suspicious activity and we thank you for your diligence and alertness. Those calls have probably helped thwart a number of potential crimes.

## **Things You Can Do**

The best form of crime prevention is engaging with neighbors. Criminals are less likely to try something on a street where they see neighbors talking with one another. Those neighbors are more likely to call police and report suspicious activity. History bears this out. So, pay attention to what's going on in your neighborhood. We cannot stress communication between neighbors enough. Alert neighbors are the best defense against burglaries, car prowls and auto theft. Pay attention, tell each other and report suspicious activity to 911.

Physically securing your home is usually one of the least expensive and most effective burglary prevention measures.

- Lock your doors and windows. When you are away from home, even for a short period of time, make sure your doors are locked and that your windows are shut and locked. Burglars look for an opportunity. An open window or door is an opportunity.
- Exterior doors should be strong enough to withstand excessive force (i.e. solid core wood or metal).
- Install good quality dead bolt locks with at least a 1" throw on all exterior doors.
- Replace the existing screws in the strike plates with screws that are 3-4" long. When a door is forced open, it is the jamb that splinters and gives, not the door. By securing the strike plates with 3"-4" long screws, you secure the jamb to the wall stud. When the deadbolt lock is engaged, the

bolt goes into the jamb and the jamb is now secured to the framing of the home. This makes it much more difficult for a person to force open a properly locked door.

- If you have double cylinder deadbolt locks (one that requires a key on both sides to open it), don't leave the keys in the lock, clearly displayed or within close proximity of the doors. **Note: per Seattle Fire Code, double cylinder deadbolts cannot be installed in rental properties.**
- If there is an interior door that separates the garage from the main living area, consider it the same as an exterior door and adopt the same precautions; deadbolt lock with a 1" throw and longer screws in the strike plates.
- The main entrance door should have a door-wide angle (180 degree) viewer/peephole.
- If you are home and someone comes to the door, you should answer it. That doesn't mean you *open* the door. Always know who's on the other side of that door before you open it. Talk to the person at the door *through* the door. If the burglar knows someone is home, more often than not, they're going to move on. Alert your neighbors to be watchful and call 911 about suspicious people going door-to-door.

### **Protecting Personal Property**

One of the key tenants of Block watch is engraving your property. You can purchase an engraver from any hardware store for under \$20. Use it to engrave your valuables (tools, bicycles, TV, DVD players, VCRs, computers). **Engrave items with your Driver's license number or State ID card number.** **Never use your social security number.** If the property you are engraving is business related, use the business name and the business license number. Items that are engraved are less likely to be taken because they can easily be traced back to the legitimate owner.

For those items that cannot be engraved, such as I-pods, jewelry or artwork, take a picture of those items. A Polaroid is fine. On the back of the picture, write a brief description and approximate value. With some items (like rings) put something next to the item to give a size reference (like a quarter). For necklaces, lay them next to a ruler and take the photo. Keep these in a safe place.

Make an inventory list of your valuables. In addition to engraving and taking photos, make a list of valuables with key identifying information. List the item name, model number, serial number, color, location in your home and approximate value.

Engraving your property, having pictures of them and maintaining an inventory list with the serial numbers are good ways to identify that the stolen property belongs to you. It increases the chances of recovered property getting back to the rightful owners. It gives investigating detectives more to work with, as there may be fingerprint evidence on the items from those who stole it. It gives investigators something to go into pawnshops with and identify specific items that may have been stolen from burglaries. We have made arrests of people trying to pawn items taken in residential burglaries.

### **Home and Business security Assessments**

As crime prevention coordinators, my colleagues and I are trained in Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (SPTED). We provide **free** home and business security assessments. We can come to your home or business, walk around with you, show you where you may have some security vulnerabilities, and make recommendations for security improvements. If you are interested in this service, please contact me via email or phone at 206.386.9766.

Until next time, Take Care And Stay Safe!

Mark Solomon  
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